

# Schwarzenegger backs California as hub for green jobs

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California can boost its economy while improving the environment if the state sticks by its law to reduce carbon emissions, said a panel of business and government leaders assembled at UC Davis on Wednesday to discuss the notion that the Sacramento region could become a hub for green jobs.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger used the forum as an opportunity to stump for his signature environmental law, known as AB 32, which is being challenged on the November ballot.

"We have to do everything we can to fight back and push back those greedy companies and make sure we protect our environmental laws," he said to a standing-room-only crowd of entrepreneurs, politicians and academics.

A group of Texas oil companies is backing a ballot initiative that would suspend AB 32 until unemployment drops below 5.5 percent for four consecutive quarters.

AB 32 requires the state to cut carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, or about 15 percent. Opponents say it will be a job killer.

Schwarzenegger said policies pushing environmental sustainability are actually driving innovation and creating jobs.

Green jobs grew by 36 percent between 1995 and 2008 in California, according to a Bay Area think tank called Next 10.

That figure compares with an increase of 13 percent for all jobs in the state.

The issue is especially significant in the Sacramento region, where the number of green jobs nearly doubled in the time period examined by Next 10.

During the discussion at UC Davis, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson said he wants the region to become an "emerald valley" where clean tech and alternative energy companies thrive.

"We've been overly reliant on government jobs, and we've been over-reliant on the housing sector," Johnson said.

"We have to figure out ways to diversify our economy, and I think diversification lies in technology ... . There's a worldwide demand for power, which equals green technology."

Johnson said he will announce a major environmental initiative for the city on Tuesday.

Alternative fuel companies are locating in Sacramento to be close to the Capitol, where policies that influence the industry are being shaped.

The California Air Resources Board is responsible for making the rules that will implement AB 32.

Mary Nichols, head of the air board, said the state's environmental laws are what's attracting companies to Sacramento.

"If we don't persevere with our progressive environmental and energy policies in California ... the investments won't go away, they'll just go somewhere else," she said.

"Maybe they'll go to Michigan, maybe they'll go abroad."

Steven Currall, dean of the business school at UC Davis, said Wednesday's forum was a precursor to a larger campus event in November focusing on clean technology.

The university is trying to position itself as a key player in the drive to make the Sacramento region a hub for environmental research and entrepreneurship.

"We're convinced that clean technologies have an important role to play in California, as well as the nation, in ensuring economic recovery," he said.

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